

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJ: UNIFIED LOCAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN BEGINS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A. TOKYO 3112 B. TOKYO 3663

SUMMARY: ON MARCH 19 OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN BEGAN FOR NATIONAL UNIFIED LOCAL ELECTIONS TO BE HELD APRIL 13 AND 27. IN ELECTIONS VOTERS WILL CHOOSE 17 NEW GOVERNORS, ASSEMBLYMENT IN 44 PREFECTURES, OVER 150 MAYORS AND THOUSANDS OF LOCAL CITY, TOWN AND VILLAGE ASSEMBLYMEN. THERE ARE FEW REAL ISSUES IN CAMPAIGN, ALTHOUGH RESULTS IN KEY AREAS SUCH AS TOKYO AND OSAKA ARE CLEARLY OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE. ELECTION OUTCOME COULD PROVIDE SOME MEASURE OF CONSERVATIVE CHANCES IN NEXT GENERAL ELECTION AND OF EXTENT OF PUBLIC ESTEEM FOR PRIME MINISTER MIKI. GOOD SHOWING COULD LEAD MIKI TO PUSH FOR EARLY GENERAL ELECTION.
END SUMMARY.

1. CAMPAIGNING FOR APRIL UNIFIED LOCAL ELECTIONS GOT UNDERWAY MARCH 19 WITH OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS IN 17 PREFECTURES TO BE HELD APRIL 13. NEW GOVERNORS WILL BE SELECTED IN HOKKAIDO, IWATE, AKITA, IBARAKI, CHIBA, TOKYO, KANAGAWA, FUKUI, NAGANO, OSAKA, WAKAYAMA, SHIMANE, FUKUOKA, SAGA, OITA, MIYAZAKI AND KAGOSHIMA. APRIL 13 ROUND
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OF BALLOTING, IN ADDITION TO GUBERANTORIAL CONTESTS, INVOLVES

ELECTION OF MAYORS IN SAPPORO, YOKOHAMA, KAWASAKI AND OF CITY ASSEMBLYMEN IN FEW OTHER CITIES. IT ALSO INCLUDES ELECTION OF PREFECTURAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS FOR 44 OF JAPAN'S 47 PREFECTURES (TOKYO, OSAKA AND OKINAWA EXLUDED). IN SECOND ROUND OF ELECTION, ON APRIL 27, VOTERS WILL CHOOSE MAYORS IN ALMOST 160 CITIES AND ASSEMBLYMEN IN 384 CITIES. AT SAME TIME, THEY WILL PICK HEADMEN IN HUNDREDS OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES AND ASSEMBLYMEMBERS IN 1,359 TOWNS AND VILLAGES. LAST TIME NATION-WIDE LOCAL ELECTIONS OF THIS SORT WERE HELD WAS IN 1971 WHEN PRIME MINISTER SATO WAS STILL IN OFFICE.

2. WHILE POLITICAL PARTIES SEEK TO EXPAND STRENGTH AT ALL LEVELS, PRIMARY FOCUS OF THEIR EFFORT IS BEING DIRECTED TOWARD GUBERNATORIAL CONTESTS AND MAYORAL ELECTIONS IN KEY CITIES. AMONG THESE, NATINAL ATTENTION IS CONCENTRATED ON GUBERNATORIAL RACES IN TOKYO AND OSAKA. IN BOTH PLACES, REFORMISTS OCCUPY TOP POSTS AND IN BOTH PLACES, BECAUSE OF OPPOSITION PARTY DIVISIONS, CONSERVATIVES THINK THEY HAVE SOME CHANCE OF OUSTING INCUMBENTS (REF TELS). OTHER 15 CONTESTED GOVERNORSHIPS ARE ALL HELD BY LDP OR LDP-BACKED CONSERVATIVES. MOST OF THESE APPEAR SAFE. HOWEVER, LDP INABILITY T FIELD MAN ATTRACTIVE ENOUGH TO CHALLENGE REFORMIST ASPIRANT KAZUJI NAGASU LEADS MOST OBSERVERS TO BELIEVE THAT KANAGAWA PREFECTURE WILL BE LOST BY CONSERVATIVES. OPINION IS ALSO WIDE-SPREAD THAT LDP COULD HAVE TROUBLE IN CHIBA AND SAGA PREFECTURES. GUBERNATORIAL CONTESTS ASIDE, CONSERVATIVES AND REFORMISTS ALIKE TELL US THAT THEY EXPECT FEW MAJOR CHANGES TO RESULT FROM CITY, TOWN AND VILLAGE ELECTIONS. CONSENSUS IS THAT IN MOST LOCAL REPRESENTAITVE BODIES, WHILE THIS OR THAT PARTY MAY GAIN OR LOSE FEW SEATS, CONSERVATIVE DOMINANCE WILL CONTINUE.

3. FOR MOST PART, LOCAL ELECTIONS ARE JUST THAT - LOCAL ELECTIONS. NATIONAL ISSUES COUNT LITTLE, AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES COUNT EVEN LESS. CONSERVATIVE-REFORMIST DISTINCTIONS ARE OFTEN FUZZY, PARTY AFFILIATIONS ARE DOWNPALYED, AND CNDIDATES DEPEND LAGELY ON PERSONALITY AND STRENGTH OF LOCAL SUPPORTER GROUPS. ONLY QUESTION LIKELY TO BE DEBATED IN LOCAL SETTING, IS WHETHER CONSERVATIVES OR REFORMISTS ARE BEST EQUIPPED TO COPE WITH ECONOMIC AND RELATED SOCIAL WELFARE PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, SINCE EVERYONE KNOWS THAT LCOAL GOVERNMENTS, WHATEVER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEIR POLITICAL COMPLEXION, DEPEND PRIMARILY ON NATIONAL GOVERNMENT FOR FINANCES AND ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDANCE AND SINCE CONSERVATIVES HAVE INCREASINGLY TAKEN INITIATIVE IN SOCIAL WELFARE AREA ALONG LINES ADVOCATED BY REFORMISTS, ISSUE SEEMS LARGELY ARTIFICIAL ONE. AND, THIS IMPRESSION REINFORCED BY RECENT FIELD TRIPS TO LOCAL AREAS, IN END, RESULTS OF ELECTIONS WILL BE MAINLY PRODUCT OF CANDIDATE'S PERSONALITY AND ORGANIZATION. WHILE LOCAL POLITICIANS AND OTHER POLITICAL OBSERVERS VIEW ELECTION IN THIS WAY, THEY

INVARIABLY ADD THAT, TO SOME DEGREE, UNIFIED ELECTION RESULTS
WILL ALSO BE MEASURE OF EXTENT TO WHICH PRIME MINISTER
MIKI'S ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE HAS HELPED IMPROVE LDP'S
PUBLIC IMAGE.

4. COMMENT: MOST IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCE OF ELECTION CAMPAIGN
OF COURSE, IS THAT FOR NEXT MONTH DIET WILL BE IN VIRTUAL
RECESS AS MEMBERS RETURN TO CONSTITUENCIES TO CAMPAIGN FOR
LOCAL CANDIDATES. CONSEQUENTLY, WE EXPECT LITTLE MOVEMENT
ON POLITICAL REFORM BILLS, ANTI-MONOPOLY LAW REVISION, NPT
RATIFICATION AND OTHER MATTERS REQUIRING DIET ACTION. BEYOND
THAT, ELECTION RESULT ITSELF MIGHT PROVIDE SOME INDICATION
AS TO WHETHER OR NOT CONSERVATIVES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CHECK LOCAL
LEVEL REFORMIST GAINS OF LAST FEW YEARS AND AS TO HOW WELL THEY
MIGHT FARE IN NEXT GENERAL ELECTION. FINALLY, GOOD CONSERVATIVE
SHOWING WILL PROBABLY STRENGTHEN MIKI'S HAND IN INTER-FACTIONAL
POWER STRUGGLE AND MAY ENCOURAGE HIM TO PUSH FOR EARLY DIET
DISSOLUTION AND GENERAL ELECTION. END COMMENT.

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